



Contractors Working Outdoors Vermiculite or Asbestos In or Around a Home or Business in Libby

EPA Information Center * 501 Mineral Avenue, Libby, MT 59923 * (406) 293-6194

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Forms of
Vermiculite

Vermiculite in Libby

Vermiculite was used in a variety of forms for decades in and around Libby homes as a soil additive, a lightweight aggregate for concrete, and for attic insulation, among other things.

If vermiculite is present, it may contain Libby asbestos. EPA will be removing accessible vermiculite, tremolite rock, or waste rock within the next several years. EPA generally leaves vermiculite in relatively inaccessible places. Vermiculite may be left in place under sidewalks and foundations, in yards when it is deeper than 18 inches, and in walls.

Construction, remodeling, or landscaping involving digging may uncover vermiculite either before or after EPA cleans the property.

Always ask the homeowner if they know where there might be subsurface vermiculite. EPA may have information on the property based on the investigation, design, and cleanup that has been done. When calling EPA, you will need to provide the address, location of the work, and the likely depth of excavation.

It is possible that you may unexpectedly find vermiculite after starting your work, perhaps by uncovering it while installing sprinklers, repairing a septic system, repairing an underground line, or doing major landscaping. EPA strongly cautions you not to disturb it in any way that may cause Libby asbestos contamination to become airborne.

Precautionary Steps to Take So You Can Get On With Your Job

Please review this list of basic precautions for guidance on what to do if you discover or suspect vermiculite while you are working:

1. **Always notify the resident.** If they haven't already told you about it, they may not know.
2. Stop work to assess the volume of vermiculite. Cover or wet down the material if possible.
3. For a small quantity of vermiculite, such as a very isolated area or a few random flakes, EPA recommends you wet it and try to work around the area. **If possible, leave it alone.** If the material is at depth, leave it there. It's better to have it buried than at the surface.
4. For larger quantities of vermiculite such as when it was used as fill around pipes, around other structures or as bulk fill (you may have sparkling soil) do not to disturb the material.
5. **No matter the volume or location of known or suspected vermiculite, contact the EPA Information Center and Lincoln County Sanitarian. In the future, Libby, Lincoln County, and EPA are considering a formal notification requirement. Please notify us early to protect yourself and your workers and to ensure the most appropriate action is taken.**



Raw and Popped Ore

Libby asbestos is considerably more toxic than other commercial asbestos products. It should be avoided or handled with extreme care. The health risk from exposure to **all** asbestos depends greatly on the amount of asbestos in the material you are disturbing and how long the exposure lasts. Frequent exposures to high levels of asbestos for lengthy periods of time pose a significant risk. Little disturbance of small amounts of vermiculite insulation or other products containing a low level of asbestos poses a smaller risk, especially if you take the basic precautions as outlined above.

Common dust or surgical masks are not effective against asbestos fibers! Wearing a respirator with a HEPA filter is the best way to avoid breathing asbestos fibers. However, they must be used properly, or exposure may still occur! For information on respirator requirements, visit the OSHA's website: www.osha.gov/SLTC/respiratoryprotection.



Who Can I Contact With Questions About Asbestos ?

EPA Information Center - 293-6194
Lincoln County Sanitarian - 293-7781 x228

The EPA, Montana Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), or Lincoln County may send personnel out to inspect a situation involving vermiculite or Libby asbestos and give guidance. Guidance may include advising the owner to allow EPA or a licensed asbestos contractor or inspector to take samples, conduct cleanup, or take other special measures to reduce the risk of asbestos exposure.

Explore EPA's Libby Asbestos web site at:
www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby

Montana Department of Environmental Quality
Asbestos Control Program (406) 444-5300

Montana law requires that employers with employees must hire a licensed inspector to determine if asbestos is present before doing any work. Some asbestos is not associated with the Libby vermiculite mine. It is regulated by the Montana DEQ. If non-Libby asbestos is found, it should be dealt with according to Montana regulations.

Explore Montana DEQ's Asbestos web site at:
<http://www.deq.mt.gov/Asbestos>

Please learn about the risks of asbestos exposure and basic precautions by reviewing the fact sheets below. The fact sheets are available at:

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1. **Living With Vermiculite** - Oct. 2003. Provides information about the potential risks of contaminated vermiculite and precautions you can take.
2. **HEPA Vacuum Cleaner Program** - Dec. 2003. Provides information on the effectiveness of HEPA vacuums and describes their role in Libby's cleanup.
3. **Risk - Past, Present and Future** - June 2005. Describes EPA's process of risk assessment and how we work toward reducing risk.

Explore the EPA web site and its links at: www.epa.gov/region8/superfund/libby